

# Longing

## An Exploration of Feminine Power

BY MEGAN MCFEELY

What comes to mind when I think of longing is a woman sitting in a tower waiting for her lover to come home. It is an ancient image from fairy tales that I rejected for many years because I thought it was disempowering. Why should a woman sit and wait for her man?

I did not understand.

I recently made a film about feminine power—it was an exploration of what it means to live from the feminine undefined by cultural and familial expectations. I thought that to know this way of being was essential to fully claim myself as a woman. It felt like a desperate call from inside, something that could not be ignored.

Is there a distinctly feminine power that rises up from inside oneself? What is it?

I understand more or less what the culture thinks of as feminine because I struggled to fit this model of femininity for years.

All of us have ideas of what feminine looks like, expressed in many visible forms. If we are into the Goddess religion, then maybe we wear flowing clothes. If we are more fashion aligned, we adopt the newest trend. There are many physical expressions of what “feminine” looks like on the outside, and we present ourselves depending upon what we value. But I never found “me” in what I wore, what I did, or what I thought.

I began the journey of creating a film by trying to understand what the feminine is by using my mind. I asked questions, read, and explored the ancient Goddess religions, but as I moved along the path I found a deep longing for my own knowing of what was true. I could not hear, know, or have a direct experience of the feminine from gathering input from others. It would take a commitment to a certain kind of aloneness. I had to reject everything from outside, learn how to be silent, and listen to my body and my feeling sense to know my own voice.

The intensity of my desire brought me what

was needed every step of the way and ultimately introduced me to the feminine power of longing. It seems as though I “longed” a direct experience of the feminine into existence.

Every human being has access to the power of longing, but it is seen as a feminine capacity because one is waiting, vulnerable and open, pining to receive. Whereas the masculine is active energy that moves outward to find what is needed, the feminine is receptive and can hold within a deep desire or commitment. It is like gestating a baby, holding, nurturing, remembering, and valuing what is held.

Of course I knew about the concept through the teachings of spiritual traditions—the path of bhakti in the Hindu tradition and the longing

states: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” And the Sufis have for centuries understood the transformative power of longing. As Sufi teacher Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee said: “Love always draws us back to love, and longing is the fire that purifies us.”

Surely, longing is not a trite exploration—and from my experience it is not only for oneself. I knew that I had to reach toward wholeness so that I could fully participate in the healing of life. It is my duty as a woman. Before this happened to me I would never have called longing a power; I thought of it as a weakness, if I thought of it at all. It is through my experience of longing that I have been shown it is



for the beloved in Sufism—but directly experiencing the power of longing was new to me. I did not know what it was, but I could feel it.

Hilary Hart in her book *Body of Wisdom* describes longing this way:

“Longing is a state of vulnerability and deep need. It can be like a cry in the heart—or a whisper. It can feel like a tender sorrow you want to watch over and protect—like when a lover is away and you wait for his or her return. It can feel like haunting homesickness for a faraway place. It can be an anguish that tears you apart—as with the death of someone near to you—and it can be a terrible sense that something is not right in the world, no matter what you do.”

We can find traces of this knowing in ancient practices and rituals. In Turkey and Iran the longing of women for their crying babies was used as part of a rain ritual. Matthew 7:7

a very active and potent power—a call from deep in the heart can attract what is needed.

I can now relate to the woman who sits in a tower, isolated from others, longing for her man to come. I have been amazed by the potency of the call to Life or God from an empty place inside, and believe that if one is steadfast and true, what is needed will be delivered. I know this power has been disregarded, but can you imagine what might happen if we women used our longing to heal the earth? At this time in history this is exactly what our longing is for. 🐦

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*Megan McFeely is the producer and director of a film about a woman's journey to find and live her feminine knowing. As She Is was screened at the Library of Alexandria in Egypt and recently won Best Debut Documentary at the Female Eye Film Festival in Toronto. As-She-Is.org*